

CHRISTIAN GIFTS AND CHRISTIAN GRACES,

A DISCOURSE ON

FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY.

BY V.

QUEBEC :

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"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."—1st Corinthians, 13th Chapter, 13th verse.

EACH dispensation recorded in the Scriptures, was attended with a promise; under the dispensation of the Old Testament, the promise of a Saviour was given; under the dispensation of the New Testament, the promise of the Holy Ghost.

The first of these was fulfilled when Christ came into the world, to offer up himself, a sacrifice for the sins of Adam's ruined race.

The second was fulfilled at the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost descended in the shape of cloven tongues of fire, and sat upon each of the Apostles.

It is also fulfilled in the daily history of the Church, when He comes to regenerate or sanctify the heart of man.

It was given for a two-fold purpose; first, to enable the Apostles to work miracles, and to speak in divers tongues; and, secondly, to assist in that great work planned by the Father of Lights, before all ages; and, finally, to be consummated in the Kingdom of His own dear Son.

The Apostle in the preceding chapter, addressing the members of the Corinthian Church, points out in a particular manner, the gifts of the Spirit.

Speaking of them he says, "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

"And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

"And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

"For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

"To another, faith by the same Spirit; to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

"To another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, *divers* kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of tongues:

"But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

And again, "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

"*Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?*

"Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?"

"But covet earnestly the best gifts. And yet shew I unto you a more excellent way."

An error of belief seems to have crept into the Church at Corinth—that if a man possessed one of the gifts of the Spirit, it was an indubitable proof, that he possessed all the requisite qualifications necessary to constitute the character of the true Christian. The Apostle, therefore, after shewing them the nature of these gifts, and commending them for seeking after the possession of them, proceeds to shew that there is something still wanting; and in the chapter whence my text is taken, disabuses them of their error; in doing which he makes use of some remarkable language, which I will first comment upon, and then proceed to the words of my text.

He commences thus: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

As if he had said, though I possessed the faculty of expressing myself in all the known tongues of the earth,—though I could boast the most sublime language, the loftiest diction, and the most splendid and most effective elocution,—though my powers of oratory far surpassed those of the most transcendent sages, whose names have graced the annals of fame,—nay,—though I could express myself, as angels do, when with veiled faces, attuning their golden lyres, they celebrate the praises and majesty of Jehovah, the King of kings; and though I even stood on the vantage ground of the angel Gabriel, and had heaven itself revealed to my wondering view, whereinto I might look, and steal imagery to adorn my flowing words, yet if I had not charity, all I could utter would be no better than the sounding of brass, I myself should be no better than a tinkling cymbal.

He proceeds—"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

As if he had said, though I possessed the powers of intuition, and could look into the mystic volume of futurity, and unfold its ample page to the view of mankind.—Though, like Isaiah, my lips were touched with hallowed fire from the holy censer,—though I were acquainted with the mystery of the creation, and of the ages prior to the formation of the spheres which gem the starry firmament,—though I possessed all the knowledge which nature, art, and science embrace,—though I could take the wings of the morning and flee to the remotest and unexplored regions of the earth, and solve the enigma of the wondrous poles which keep this mighty globe in equipoise,—though I had explored the secret recesses of the earth, and had trodden the coral grottoes and the crystal palaces of the fathomless deep, and had beheld its monsters of creation never before exhibited to human eye,—though I had traversed the gloomy halls of Satan's dark domain, and, like St. Paul himself, caught up into the third heaven—had beheld the ravishing and entrancing glories within its pearly gates, which eye might see and heart conceive, but neither tongue nor pen can tell,—though I had faith so that I could say to this tree, let no fruit grow upon thee hereafter, and presently it should wither away ; and to this mountain be ye plucked up, and be ye cast into the sea, and it should be accomplished ; nay, though I could arrest the sun in its course, and change the moon in its phases—call down the stars from on high—stop the swift progress of the comet's awful flight—silence the thunder, and render harmless the forked and arrowy lightnings—swift messengers of death—“ yet if I have not charity, I am nothing.”

Again—“ And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”

As if he had said, though my life were spent in deeds of benevolence—though I had administered to the wants of the poor, and relieved the necessities of the stranger,—though I visited the sick, and applied remedies to their various sufferings, with free and gratuitous hand,—though I did not forget the prisoner, but obtained his release from the jailer,—though I redeemed the bond of the debtor, and procured his discharge from prison ; and after having thus dispensed all my wealth and substance, and nothing more remained for me to bestow,—though I should freely give my body to be burned for the benefit and welfare of my fellow men—yet if I have not charity—if I have not the graces, as well as the gifts of the Spirit, it profiteth me nothing.

The apostle after making these remarkable observations on charity, falsely so called, proceeds to point out some of the most remarkable features in that charity which never faileth ; but as it will form the concluding head of my discourse, I shall dwell more particularly on it in its proper order, and explain as briefly as the subject will allow :

1st.—The nature of Faith.

2ndly.—The nature of Hope.

3rdly.—The nature of Charity.

And may that Holy Spirit which Christ has promised to guide us into all truth, enlighten our minds, and assist us by His divine power, in these our meditations, that they may indeed be to us the words of eternal life.

Faith, in the words of the apostle, is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Man has sinned—he is a guilty creature in the sight of God, both by nature and practice ; by nature he inherits the corruptions which Adam's sin entailed upon him ; and by practice, he sins daily against His Maker. He has, therefore, the guilt of original sin from our first parents, and the guilt of actual sin from his own transgression ; he has become amenable to the offended majesty of heaven—justice cries aloud for vengeance—death is ready to slay him, and hell is open to receive his guilty and polluted soul.

Whose gloomy condition is this ? 'Tis yours my friends. Alas ! 'tis mine also. But is there no hope, no way of escape ? Is despair to overwhelm us in the black darkness of eternal night ?

Is there no sun of hope to dawn upon our benighted souls ? Oh ! yes. Behold the Sun of Righteousness arising with healing in His beams—penetrating the thick darkness which surrounds us—dissipating our gloom—renovating our hopes—leading us back to, and reconciling us with our offended Father and God. Jesus has paid the ransom due for our transgressions, He has atoned for our misdeeds on the cross at Calvary.

The salvation which He has wrought is perfect, is complete ; and a glorious jubilee of liberty is proclaimed to ransomed sinners : death and hell are overcome, and lie vanquished under the feet of the mighty and all conquering Jesus.

Justice is satisfied. Man is saved—is saved, did I say ? Oh, no ! Strange infatuation ! Man refuses the offered pardon ; he puts from him the proffered salvation. Why this strange conduct ? He does not believe the message—"Believe on

the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."—No! he is either so sinful that he cannot believe that the Saviour will have regard for, and accept such a wretch as he is; or else he wishes to trust to his own arm, a puny arm of flesh, and his own worthless deeds, (good, certainly, in his own eyes,) rather than accept a free pardon. His pride would rather *deserve* forgiveness than *receive it gratuitously*. But what is required on the part of the sinner? Nothing but this faith—a belief that Christ is not only ready to save, but that he is also ready to save you. Faith then, my dear friends, is all that is required on our parts; pardon is offered to you, and now, will you accept it, with its accompanying privileges? A peaceful conscience in this world, a crown of immortality and glory in the world to come,—or do you reject it and choose, what it pains me to say, unutterable and everlasting misery and woe?

"Choose ye this day whom ye will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt, or the Lord of Heaven, and Christ the Redeemer of mankind."

What is faith then? It is simply an implicit belief on the promise and offer of Christ, when He says, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." It is the believing and accepting the offer in our own persons—it is taking the Almighty at His word, in the same simplicity of mind and feeling in which a child believes and relies upon the word of its parent.

But is this all—is faith alone requisite for salvation? Yes, provided you have a lively faith. But faith without works is dead. If you have this lively faith, your whole life, walk, and conduct will bear the evidences or fruits of this lively faith.—Your consciences will become tender of doing any thing that may be displeasing to God. You will have prayer in your families, prayer in your closets, you will not neglect the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, but you will embrace every opportunity of shewing forth your Maker's praise, not with your lips only, but also in your lives, by giving up yourselves to His service, and by walking before Him soberly and righteously all your days; but as the gracious evidences of the possession of this vital principle is comprehended in the term of Charity, I shall leave this part till I come to that head, and proceed to shew the advantage derived from the possession of Faith, namely Hope.

Hope springing from a lively faith, is one of the purest

sources whence the Christian draws consolation and support in the hour of trial and adversity. Through faith he has hope that God, his Heavenly Father, will forgive him; that Jesus Christ, his Redeemer, will save him; and that the Holy Spirit will sanctify his heart, mind, and actions, and make him a meet partaker of the inheritance of eternal life. Hope, as I said before, springs from faith.

Has the Christian faith in God! he hopes that his sins will be forgiven, and that he shall be accepted by his Heavenly Father. Has he faith in Christ! he hopes to be saved from his sins, and from the punishment due to them of hell and death. Has he faith in the Holy Ghost! he has hope, peace, and joy in believing that he is, by its sanctifying influences, a fit inheritor of everlasting happiness in heaven. Has he faith in time of difficulty and trial? He hopes that God, by the power of His Almighty hand, will bring him through the floods of distress which surround him, once more set his feet on a rock, and establish his goings. Has he faith in the time of persecution, when he is evil spoken of—when calumniated by enemies—when false friends with smooth tongues, and treacherous hearts, wring from him, alas! too confiding, the secrets of his inmost soul, and betray them, misrepresented by their own monstrous exaggerations and departures from truth, to an unthinking, censorious, and fault-finding world! hope brings back to him comfort from the integrity of his own heart, and from the reflection that the good hand of God will not desert him, but make his name, character, and reputation, appear as unsullied in the eyes of the world, as it really is.

This hope will enable him to bear censure, and in the language of the admirable Cecil, he will know that good men and great minds can afford to lose somewhat by censure and detraction; for as the bright sun retains its splendour, though occasionally eclipsed and darkened by a passing cloud, so a truly Christian spirit, buoyed up by faith and hope, will maintain and set forth the dignity of the Christian character, while the mere professor and man of little mind will be angry and fretful at the slightest breath of censure and detraction. He will, indeed, be, like the dim taper, afraid of being puffed out. It is this hope that makes the Christian not ashamed of acknowledging his master, Christ. It was this hope that made Abraham willing to offer up his son Isaac on Mount Moriah. It was

this hope that was the stay of Job in the midst of his afflictions, and which caused him to say, "Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book!

"That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!

"For I know *that* my redeemer liveth, and *that* he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth:

"And *though* after my skin *worms* destroy this *body*, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

"Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; *though* my reins be consumed within me."

It was this hope which strengthened and fortified the holy army of Martyrs, and enabled them with becoming constancy to endure the cruel tortures and fiery trials to which they were subjected.

It enabled the pious Latimer when preparing for the stake, to say to his fellow martyr, "Brother Ridley, be of good cheer, we shall this day light up such a flame in England, as I trust, by the grace of God, will never be extinguished." That flame never has been extinguished—I pray to God, it never may.

Such a hope as this inspired other holy martyrs, who, when they were ready to be offered up, clasping each other's hands exclaimed—Farewell, sun! Farewell, moon and stars! Ye glittering orbs of light, farewell! Farewell, ye lovely land scapes, verdant vales, and gently flowing rivers. We leave this world with all its fleeting scenes, without a sigh; for, "Lo! a world of never ending bliss bursts to our enraptured gaze."

In fine, hope springing from faith, disarms death of his sting, takes away the fear of the grave and hell, and presents to the view of the dying saint, a joyful resurrection, when time shall be no more, and a glorious immortality through the long drawn vistas of a never ending eternity.

Hope springs from faith, and love or charity from both.

Faith without works is dead. The fruits of faith and hope are good works, in other words, "charity."

Let us direct our attention as briefly as possible to this charity.

I have already shewn what it is not—it remains to be shewn what it is.

Charity embraces in its comprehensive name, all the fruits of the Spirit, which are love, peace, joy, gentleness, meekness, goodness, temperance, long-suffering. It is the love of God

shed abroad in the human heart, and displayed in every act of our lives, towards our fellow men.

Is it love ? It displays itself in a peculiar manner towards God, who as our Father in Heaven takes care of our souls, and provides for the wants of our bodies, defends us from the dangers to which we are constantly liable, and forgives us for His Son's sake, the manifold transgressions we have committed against Him.

We shew this love towards our Saviour, who died for us, and who by His blood has reconciled us to His Father, and washed away all our guilty stains.

We have by it sweet communion and fellowship with the Holy Ghost, to whose dictates we listen, over whose precepts we ponder, and by whose gracious assistance we are enabled manfully to enter the lists against the world, the flesh, and the devil ; and whose sanctifying influences render us more than conquerors through the blood of Him who loved us.

Is it peace ? Free from the fear and consequences of sin, assured of our interest in the Saviour's blood, and of His love towards us, we have quiet minds, and peaceful consciences, free from the distracting cares of this life, which otherwise would press more heavily than man could bear, knowing that we are in God's hand, and trusting to His bounteous Providence, in every trying hour ; and fully assured of His kind guardian hand being extended over us, to shield us from every foe, from every adversity, we shall evidence another fruit of the Spirit, joy—joy produced by the delightful thought of freedom from sin, death, and hell, by the experience of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and communion with the Holy Ghost ; and in anticipation of an eternity of bliss, our joy will be unspeakable and full of glory.

Charity refines the tempers and passions, it renders the slothful diligent, the drunkard temperate, the usurious and extortioner merciful and just, the stealer a worker with his own hands, the Sabbath breaker an attendant on God's house, it causes the swearer and blasphemer to use Godly, pious, and serious language ; it makes the prayerless man prayerful, the mere professor a true christian, the disobedient child dutiful and submissive, bad husbands and wives patterns of conjugal love and felicity, to sum in as few words as possible, it is the fulfilling of the whole law, " Love to God and love to man." Charity never faileth, as it is far beyond compare in excellence with the gifts of the Spirit, so it excels the other graces, faith and

hope. Faith and hope are the means, charity is the end to be obtained. Faith is the bark on the tempestuous ocean of life, to which the Christian mariner commits his soul, hope is his anchor, stay and safeguard amidst every storm which may arise to buffet him. Faith and Hope are the two beacons which guide him to the celestial Haven—which having attained—Faith and Hope like pale stars shall die away and vanish in the superior effulgence and brightness of love made perfect in that land of bliss.

Faith and Hope are the two arms which the pilgrim bound zionward stretches forth to pluck the pleasant fruits on his journey to refresh his weary, panting soul and to enable him to reach the gates of Paradise, which having entered—Faith shall be absorbed in vision—in beholding the glories of the everlasting hills, the starry pavement, the golden throne—and Jesus, the King of Saints, sitting amongst his redeemed people—Hope shall be swallowed up in fruition in the enjoyment of those felicities, glories, faculties, powers and communion with the souls of the just made perfect, which nor words can describe nor heart can conceive.—But charity shall still remain, shall exist through the boundless ages of eternity, love shall reign pre-eminent, redeeming love shall be the theme, its strain shall never cease.

My friends, is any thing more, in the way of remark, required from me, or do you draw inferences yourselves? I would fain recommend the drawing of practical inferences in your own minds.—Have you ever reflected on the nature of True Faith? Are you assured that you possess this vital principle? Do you feel hope and joy in believing? Have you the hope which maketh not ashamed? Hope of a joyful resurrection and a blessed immortality? Have you then this faith and this hope? If so, produce your evidences—shew me a credential that you possess them—shew me your good works, your kindness to servants, your obedience to masters, your attention to families, your love to parents, your respect to neighbours, your loyalty to the Queen, your affection for christians, your esteem for Christ, your love to God. Shew your Faith and Hope by shewing charity.